



## 1. WHAT IS MERCURY?

Mercury is a metal that can come from natural and man-made sources. It is found in rocks, soil, and water.

## 2. WHY IS MERCURY IN FISH HARMFUL?

Mercury can be very harmful to the brain and even small amounts can damage a brain that is just starting to form or grow. That's why young children as well as unborn and breast-fed babies are at the most risk.

Too much mercury may affect a child's behavior and lead to learning problems later in life.

No one knows what the "safe" level of mercury is. However, the advice in this fact sheet is designed with a safety factor to protect against harm.

## 3. HOW DO FISH GET HIGH LEVELS OF MERCURY?

Fish take in mercury from water as it passes over their gills. As reef animals and small fish absorb this harmful substance it stays inside their bodies.

As bigger fish eat small fish, the mercury levels increase. Those at "the top of the food chain" are the ones with the high levels.

## "Should I stop eating fish?"

No! You should eat 2 – 3 servings a week as part of a healthy diet.  
Don't stop eating fish!

## 4. CAN COOKING FISH GET RID OF THE MERCURY?

No, there is no method of cooking or cleaning fish that will reduce the amount of mercury. Pregnant women should enjoy cooked fish and not eat raw fish as raw fish may have bacteria that can harm your baby.

## 5. WHAT IF I HAVE ALREADY BEEN EATING MORE THAN ADVISED?

Mercury leaves the body slowly. If you have eaten more than you should, do not eat any of the fish that should be limited for a few months.

## 6. IS THERE MORE I CAN FIND OUT ABOUT MERCURY IN OUR FISH?

For more information:

<https://www.epa.gov/fish-tech/2017-epa-fda-advice-about-eating-fish-and-shellfish>

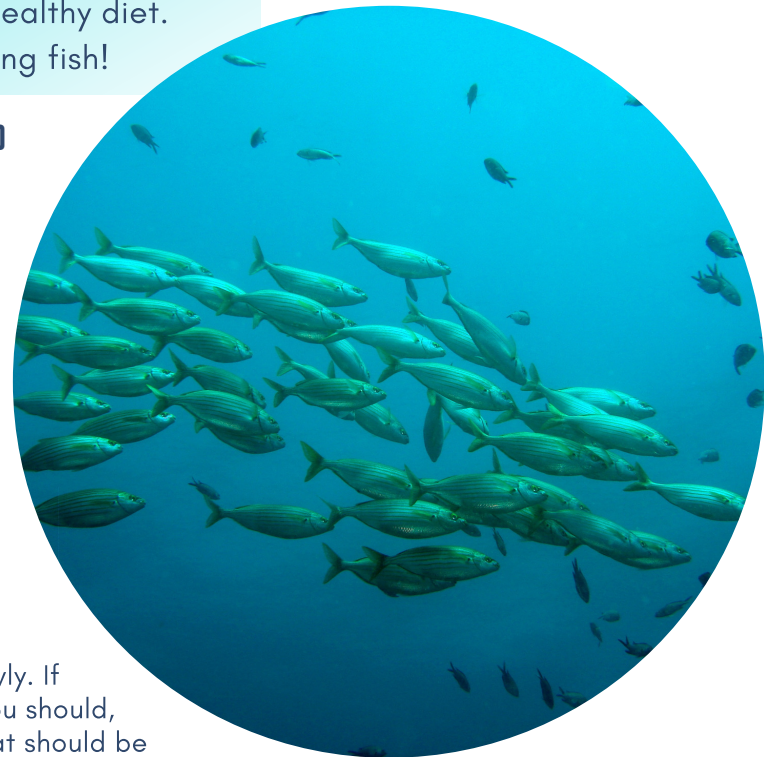
or call the Hawai'i Department of Health  
(808) 586-4249



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# A LOCAL GUIDE TO EATING FISH SAFELY

## Hawai'i guidance for:

- Pregnant women
- Nursing mothers
- Young children





## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Fish is a healthy, high-protein, low-fat food that can be part of a balanced diet for you and your family. However, some fish have levels of mercury that may be harmful to the developing brain.

If you eat fish once a week or more, you may need to change:

- The kinds of fish you eat, or
- How often you eat certain fish.

If you are pregnant or could become pregnant, breastfeeding, or have young children, follow these guidelines when eating fish.

## DO NOT EAT

Any type or form of (including raw, cooked, dried, smoked, or jerky):

- Kajiki (Pacific blue marlin)
- Shark
- Swordfish (shutome)

## SEAFOOD YOU CAN EAT ANYTIME

- Akule
- Awa (milkfish)
- Cod (butterfish)
- 'Ōpelu (mackerel)
- Fish small enough to fit in a frying pan whole
- Ika (squid or calamari) and tako (octopus)
- Scallops and shrimp
- Moi
- Mullet
- Pollock
- Salmon

### For Other Fish

Serving size matters. A typical serving of fish is 3 ounces for a child and 6 ounces for an adult. If your serving sizes are smaller, you can eat fish more often.

Note: 3 ounces of fish is about the size and thickness of a deck of playing cards.

## SAFE TO EAT WITH LIMITS

### - Group A -

Eat up to once a week from this group

- Aku (skipjack tuna)
- Yellowfin tuna
- Canned albacore (white) tuna
- Canned light tuna\*

\*OK to eat up to 2-3 times per week

- Channel catfish
- Grouper
- Halibut
- Mahimahi (dolphin fish)
- Nairagi (striped marlin)
- Red devil
- Tucunare (peacock bass)

### - Group B -

Eat up to once every two weeks from this group

- Ahi (fresh bigeye/tombo)
- Ono (wahoo)
- Opah (moonfish)

**Mercury builds up in the body. If you eat fish from Group B, wait two weeks before eating any more fish from Group A or B.**